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THE BEQUEST OF
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1918

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A TRIBUTE

TO THE MEMORY OF

ROBERT KELLY.



His Address,

DELIVERED JUNE 4, 1856,

BY EDGAR S. VAN WINKLE,

BEFORE THE CENTURY AND THE COLUMN.

AND PRINTED BY THEIR ORDER.

" Only the memory of the just
Smells sweet and blossoms in the dust."



NEW YORK:


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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

At the regular monthly meeting of THE CENTURY, held at No. 24 Clinton Place, on Saturday evening, May 3d, 1856, the Hon. GULIAN C. VERPLANCK in the chair, and a full attendance of members present—

Mr. CHARLES M. LEUPP called to the notice of the Club the decease of Mr. ROBERT KELLY, one of its founders, who, up to the last meeting at which he had been present and called it to order, had been one of its most esteemed and active members.

Mr. LEUPP alluded in warm terms to the many claims that Mr. KELLY had upon the regard of its members, and to the fact that on the decease of Mr. DANIEL SEYMOUR an eulogium had been delivered before the Club by Mr. KELLY. He suggested the propriety of some action of the Club expressive of their regret at the loss they had now sustained.

On motion of Mr. LEUPP, it was

Resolved, That Mr. EDGAR S. VAN WINKLE be requested to deliver an eulogium upon the life and character of Mr. Kelly, and that a committee of three be appointed by the chair to make arrangements therefor.

The chair appointed Mr. CHARLES M. LEUPP, Mr. OLIVER S. STRONG, and Mr. B. R. WINTHROP such committee.

On motion of Mr. OLIVER S. STRONG, it was

Resolved, That The Century has heard, with deep emotion, the announcement of the death of ROBERT KELLY, one of its founders and constant members.

That his cultivated mind and varied accomplishments in many departments of learning; the deep interest he took in the cause of education; the active and zealous devotion of his life to the moral and intellectual improvement of his fellow-men; his eminently practical abilities; his public usefulness and private worth, rendered him a most valuable member of this association, and impress us deeply with the loss we have sustained by his death.

That while with the public in general we deplore his decease, it is gratifying to know that we in particular enjoyed a closer communion with him living; and, as members of The Century, we feel proud of his talents, his virtues, his active benevolence, and his varied usefulness.

That we deeply sympathize with his family in their affliction, and tender to them the expression of our unfeigned sorrow.

That these resolutions be entered on our minutes, and a copy be communicated by the secretary to the family of the deceased.

[From the Minutes.]

BAILEY MYERS, Sec'y.

At a monthly meeting of THE CENTURY Club, held at No. 24 Clinton Place, on Wednesday evening, June 4th, 1856, the Hon. GULIAN C. VERPLANCK in the chair—

The members of the THE COLUMN were present by invitation.

Mr. EDGAR S. VAN WINKLE, in compliance with the joint invitation of THE COLUMN and THE CENTURY, delivered an eulogium commemorative of the life and character of the late ROBERT KELLY, one of the founders, and a member of both associations.

On motion of Mr. WILLIAM M. EVAERTS, it was

Resolved, That the thanks of The Column and The Century be returned to Mr. VAN WINKLE for his beautiful and appropriate effort, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same to The Century for publication.

[From the Minutes.]

BAILEY MYERS, Sec'y.

At a meeting of The Column, held April 28, 1856, Mr. LEUPP having announced the death of ROBERT KELLY, it was

Resolved, That EDGAR S. VAN WINKLE be requested to deliver an eulogium commemorative of the virtues of our fellow-member, before the Society, at such time as he may appoint.

[Extract from the Minutes.]

OLIVER S. STRONG, Sec'y.

ADDRESS.

Fellow-Members of THE CENTURY and Brethren of THE COLUMN :

We have met together, to pay, in common, a tribute of respect to the memory of our departed friend, ROBERT KELLY.

Selected by both bodies to deliver an address on the character of Mr. Kelly, I found, in preparing for the discharge of the duty I had undertaken, that so much I would wish to say would be appropriate to both institutions, and so little exclusively pertinent to either, that it was expedient to address you jointly, unless some reason, not apparent to me, existed to the contrary.

On consulting many members of each Society, the proposition was approved, and the Committee of The Century adopted the necessary measures to carry it into effect.

Besides, as whenever *I* should speak of Kelly, I

would speak also of The Column, the union of the two societies in one audience renders those allusions. I may make both just and proper, which might seem intrusive or alien to The Century alone.

Thirty years (a large segment of the petty circle of human life) have elapsed since Mr. Kelly was associated with several now present in founding The Column. Since then, youth has ripened to manhood; life has advanced far on its voyage; each one has assumed his place in the busy world—has become engrossed in business or in cares—has pursued his pleasures and his duties—has experienced his joys and his sorrows, his reverses and his triumphs;—and yet, after all the vicissitudes of these thirty years, most of the survivors of that little band still gather around The Column, and still cherish its endearing friendships; the delight of their youth tempered into the solace of their manhood.

From the foundation of The Column until his death, Mr. Kelly was a constant and prominent member, and always bore towards it a very ardent attachment. His surviving brother, in a communication obligingly and kindly furnished me, says:—"His intercourse with the members of The Century and Sketch Club was most agreeable to him; but there was one fraternity which was his first and continued to be his

chief love—‘The Column.’ A member of it for thirty years, he regarded his brother members with peculiar affection. The weekly meetings of this society, continued through many years, did much to train him for the important station he was called to occupy; and his association with the gentlemen of The Column I regard as having been the chief means of maintaining in him a love of study and literary pursuits, and preventing him from becoming a mere man of business.”

A friendship which was so intimate and so enduring Death has rudely severed; but I trust it will form a sufficient apology for my addressing some few remarks, more particularly, to the members of The Column.

The Century, with its varied interests, its troops of members, in the pride of its youth, and the flush of its success—with its eye upon an auspicious future and a long career of prosperity opening before it—may, on such an occasion of a common bereavement, gracefully yield something to The Column, whose life is in the past, and whose chief pleasures lie in its memories.

Connected with Mr. Kelly as I have been, in both institutions, from their origin, I know the loss that each has suffered; and if I affectionately magnify The

Column's bereavement, I do not therefore under-estimate that of The Century.

It is not that I "love Cæsar less," but that I "love Rome more."

And now to you, my brethren of The Column, I would address a few words in memory of our deceased brother. On the last previous occasion of a similar offering to a departed member, Seymour was the theme, and Kelly was the orator. After the lapse of scarcely five years we mourn for the orator as he and we then mourned for the departed. In a little time, years or months, or weeks, the same tribute may be demanded for some other brother, and some one of us shall rise and with suffused eye and beating heart speak *his* eulogy. And so let it be, while there shall remain one member of The Column to speak and one to listen to the recital of the virtues and the talents of a departed brother !

Kelly died in the midst of the community in which he was born and reared—in the midst of which he had displayed his remarkable qualities—in which his virtues were known, and by which they were appreciated. He died, and seldom has the death of a private citizen been followed by such universal regret. With the public acknowledgments of his worth by the civic authorities and by the numerous scien-

tific, political, financial and benevolent bodies he was connected with, we have mingled ours. But selfish even in our grief, we have felt pleased, as it were, that we could mourn for him as they could not—that our bereavement was guarded by a charmed circle into which no others' sorrows could intrude; and however much the public and his friends and acquaintances might lament for him, we alone could sorrow for him as one of The Column's dead.

The Column's dead! How the line lengthens!—how the inscriptions on the entablatures of memory thicken!—Cummings—Miller—Merry—the Lawrences—Seymour—Kelly!

The Column's dead! They are still ours—ours in the recollection of their talents, their virtues and their friendship. Tender memories cluster around them: their influences go with us through life; and The Column could not be what it is but for the sad and sorrowful bereavements it has endured.

The temple at Jerusalem, when the last stone was placed, and it stood in all its finished beauty and entirety, excited the admiration of the worshippers, who crowded its stately courts; but how much deeper its interest to the solitary devotee still lingering in its recesses, after time and the barbarian have spoiled its symmetry and ruined half its ornaments!

Your resolutions requested me to deliver the *eulogy* of our friend. Such was the natural impulse under the first stroke of bereavement; but to the practiced judgments of this audience mere eulogy would be tasteless, or like the sweet described by the poet—

“Whereof a little,
More than a little is by far too much;”

and I have deemed it better and within the spirit of my duty to attempt a judicial analysis of his character and acquirements. I shall thus (if successful in my aim) be able to recal him more vividly before you, and by due admixture of light and shade, and tone and coloring, to give a truer picture than if I painted only the brighter spots, or even daguerreotyped all his virtues and nought besides.

The instincts of our being contend not more continuously and perseveringly against death, than the instincts of the soul against oblivion. The normal state of the body is life—that of the soul is existence. When the sources of life fail, the body dies; but our creed teaches what our reason allows us to hope, and our faith to believe, that the soul still survives, and in other forms and other spheres, and with higher intelligence, continues its existence. Perhaps, then, the honors we pay to the memory of a good man who

has departed, may follow him, as the incense burned on the Jewish altars of old was supposed to ascend as a sweet savor to the courts of Heaven.

But, be this as it may, the desire to honor the memory of a deceased friend, springs from a generous impulse, which finds a consolation in expressing its sorrow (irremediable though the misfortune be) in outward signs of mourning and expressions of respect.

A feeling of this nature has assembled us together this evening; and although the tribute we pay may be a feeble one, it will not be entirely devoid of gratification. We shall have endeavored to honor the memory of a good man and to do justice to the virtues of an exemplary citizen.

The precedent we institute to-night, of recording our sense of the merits of a deceased member, seems to be one peculiarly appropriate to The Century. If the original design of our society—that of associating together all that is distinguished in our city in art, in literature, and in the love of both—shall be carried out, (and we have increasing evidences that it will be,) we owe it to ourselves and our institution to furnish from ourselves, and for ourselves, some memorial of those Death snatches away more elaborate than the resolutions in our minutes, and more permanent than the

evanescent paragraphs of a newspaper obituary. For the following sketch of Mr. Kelly's life, I am indebted to the kindness of his brother, the Hon. William Kelly, of Rhinebeck, whose attachment and affection to Robert through life, and to his memory since his death, seem to prove there *is no friend* that sticketh closer than a brother.

At first, I thought I would extract such portions of it as I needed; but I found the whole of it so sincere, so interesting, and so well worded, that I concluded to insert it entire, not venturing to mutilate or to abridge it. It is a pleasant testimonial of fraternal affection and a fitting tribute from one accomplished and loving brother to the memory of another.

[In attempting to sketch something of the life and character of ROBERT KELLY, the writer is sensible that so far as incidents are concerned, it must prove uninteresting, for his history was unmarked by any event of an extraordinary nature. He pursued the even tenor of his way—a quiet, unobtrusive man, who devoted his time, as he at last sacrificed his life, for the welfare of others.]

He was born on the fifteenth day of December, 1808, and died April twenty-seventh, 1856—his age being forty-seven. His father, who bore the same name, was born in the north of Ireland, in the county of Cavan, in the year 1767, of parents who were firm adherents to the Scotch Presbyterian Church. Soon after reaching manhood, Mr.

Kelly, senior, became conspicuous among the Irish patriots of the day, and took an active part in that attempt at revolution which will forever be associated with the name of Emmet.

He was enrolled as an officer, and because of his zeal came under the notice of the government authorities, who ordered his arrest for treason. A faithful friend gave him notice of the approach of soldiers sent to secure him, barely in time for him to make his escape from his father's house. That hurried adieu was the last he gave to his early home ; for, satisfied that the authorities had such information as would ensure his arrest and conviction if he remained in Ireland, he felt that he could do nothing more for his country, and so resolved to seek for liberty in another land. With difficulty he succeeded in reaching a seaport, and getting on board a vessel bound to New York, where he arrived in the year 1796.

He immediately engaged in business in this city, and was a successful merchant until the year 1819, when he retired possessed of a handsome fortune. He was extensively and favorably known, distinguished by inflexible integrity, business capacity, and great kindness to all with whom he came in contact ; he showed especial interest in the success of young merchants, some of whom still speak of him with grateful recollections. He married in New York in the year 1803, and died in 1825, leaving three sons and a daughter. Two years before his decease, he resumed business solely to introduce his two eldest sons into commercial life ; and when he died, he bequeathed to them, though both were then minors, the valuable connection he had established.

His son Robert, from early youth, evinced much love for study : at school, he was always remarked for diligence, never in any instance failing to reach the highest position

in his class. His first classical instruction was given by the learned and eccentric John Walsh. His immediate preparation for college was at the celebrated school of Mr. Nelson, who, though blind, was regarded as the most successful teacher of the day. Nelson's chief wish always was, to present the best scholars for admission to Columbia College, and his hopes were high that Robert Kelly would enter at the head of the class. At that date, the arrangement of students was not alphabetically, but according to merit, and there was of course a strong rivalry between the incoming freshmen. The hopes of Nelson were not doomed to disappointment: he had the pleasure to hear his favorite, a puny lad of thirteen, declared the best scholar.

And now began that training which confirmed his habits of application and perseverance, and made Mr. Kelly what in after life he was. He soon discovered that there were minds in his class naturally superior to his own, and that he must exert himself to the utmost in order to maintain his standing. He resolved upon it, and gave himself up to study. If he could not prepare his lessons by *ten* o'clock at night, he would study till *twelve* or *two*, or even *four* o'clock; but he *would not sleep* until he had mastered them. Such close application at one time threatened his health: his eye-sight was somewhat impaired also; but during the long summer vacations, he always recruited sufficiently to resume work as earnestly as ever, and he continued his studies without interruption.

He graduated in 1826 with the highest honors, having maintained his position during the whole college term. This was no small achievement when such men as Seymour and Anderson and other eminent scholars, who might be named, were members of the class.

His father died about a year before Robert graduated,

and he had no one to confer with in relation to his future course in life but his two brothers, they being but little older than himself. A council of the young brothers, aged 17, 19 and 21, was accordingly held, to determine what Robert should do. Their father had left a handsome sum to each of his children, but not enough to maintain them separately, in the style of living to which they had been accustomed; it was therefore necessary that some profession or business should be chosen which was likely to be remunerative. The course of thought in the deliberation was much in this wise :

“ Robert is qualified for attempting any of the learned professions, and would in time no doubt be successful, but it will require many years; and he will certainly have reached middle life, perhaps old age, before he accumulates such a fortune as will give him the command of his own time. On the other hand, he is equally qualified for commercial life, where in all probability he would, within ten or fifteen years, acquire all the money he needed, and thereafter might dispose of his time as he thought proper. The brothers urged him to join them in business, and assured him of their intention to place him on an equal footing with themselves.”

He did not hesitate long, but entered the counting-house, and at the proper time was admitted as a partner.

During his commercial career, he was distinguished for perseverance and untiring industry, for extraordinary attention to detail, for great decision of character, and for an integrity and sense of honor which no temptation could reach. No misrepresentation, however slight, on the part of his clerks, was ever allowed to pass unrebuked. By the establishment of just and inflexible rules in every department, he acquired for himself and the house a reputation for integrity and fairness never excelled.

In the year 1836, his eldest brother (John) died, and his brother William soon after announced his intention to retire from business. Robert having now acquired a fortune equal to his wishes, resolved also to retire; and thus, *before reaching the age of twenty-nine*, he was a man of leisure, with ample means to pursue such course of life as his tastes and inclination might prompt.

Engrossing as were his duties and cares whilst in business, he yet found time to pursue his studies. For eight months in the year, he could command his evenings, and these were spent in the study, principally in the acquisition of languages, under the instruction of the most able teachers of that time; he thus became master of French, Spanish, Italian, German and Hebrew; and this knowledge, as well as his love for and recollection of the classics, was kept fresh by regular systematic reading throughout his life.

On leaving business, he resumed his studies with increased vigor, and began to accept positions where he thought he could be useful, preferring those connected with education. He became a trustee of the New York University, and so continued until within a few years; during this connection, he gave much thought and care to its interests, for it was a period of great anxiety and embarrassment.

Here, as everywhere, his views were honest, independent and practical, at the same time marked by great consideration for the rights and feelings of others. The testimony of the early professors of that institution, numbering such men as Proudfoot and Tappan and Tayler Lewis, will fully bear out this assertion.

He became about this time a director of the Mechanics' Bank, and so continued till his death. He took an active interest in its management; and though connected with

many other important moneyed associations, was perhaps more widely known among commercial men in this connection than any other.

In the year 1839, he first became a manager of the House of Refuge; and on the death of its President, Stephen Allen, in the year 1852, he was elected as the successor. Mr. Kelly certainly regarded this charity with more favor than any other, because he believed it to be the most useful of all the truly benevolent institutions which adorn our city. He would often, with trembling voice, tell of cases of reform, where the vile had been reclaimed by its influence and had become good and virtuous citizens.

In March, 1842, Mr. Kelly married Miss Annetta A. Hutton, daughter of George Hutton, Esq., of Rhinebeck, and immediately after went to Europe, spending nearly two years abroad; he travelled extensively on the Continent, and availed himself of the opportunity to make valuable additions to his already choice library.

He returned home, resolved to devote his time, talents and fortune to the work of doing good; he recognized his duty to his fellow-men, and felt that he had *no right* to live solely for his own gratification. Stimulated by such a motive, based on religious principle, he willingly assumed duty after duty, until his time was well nigh engrossed by them.

His views on subjects were usually conservative; and being gifted with a judgment remarkably sound and discriminating, he invariably inspired his associates with confidence, and acquired great influence. Added to this, his mind was rapid in its action; he came to his decisions promptly and firmly, and, as a consequence, he could accomplish an amount of business quite surprising. That

which would have been deemed by most men a heavy burden of labor, was to him a mere pleasant occupation.

His connection with the Board of Education of this city was one of the most important events of his life. When placed at the head of that body, arrangements had been entered into for the erection of the Free Academy—that crowning glory of the free school system of New York. He took the utmost interest in superintending the erection of the building, and then in the more essential matter of securing the best attainable corps of professors, and establishing such a course of study that should be sufficiently popular in its character to meet the expectations of the people, and at the same time thorough and practical. He also understood the difficulty of devising such a plan of government and discipline as should be suitable for the control of hundreds of youths, not perhaps of a proper age to be restrained by the same rules and influences which would be successful in a college.

In much of all this, he had no model to imitate, and the task was necessarily a difficult one; but the success of the whole scheme, both of study and discipline, is enough alone to stamp his name as one of the most enlightened and judicious among the friends of education.

When the noble edifice was publicly dedicated, Mr. Kelly made an address, peculiarly characteristic. He gave a history of the movement which had that day the triumph of setting apart such an institution for the cause of education,—*a college for the people*, where the sons of the rich and the poor would ever meet on equal terms—where the artificial distinctions of society would be unrecognized—where there would be no aristocracy, save that of mind. He carefully and clearly cautioned against any attempt to inculcate religious sectarianism on the one hand, or rationalism and infidelity on the other. That address has been published;

and if it answer the purpose which its author intended, it will serve as a chart to warn the Academy equally from the dangers of fanaticism and free-thinking. It was his opinion, that if our admirable system of free education were to be broken up, it would be caused by the quarrels of religious sectarians.

Whilst in the Board of Education, he warmly advocated the establishment of evening schools for adults. Thousands of those whose early education had been neglected have gladly availed themselves of this wise provision, and have thus given the best possible evidence of its usefulness. He also prepared an able report on the policy of founding a Free Academy for females, advocating the measure, yet counselling delay for a year or two, until the practical working of the present institution shall be known.

For some years he was an active trustee of the Madison University, a college under the control mainly of the Baptist denomination. Subsequently, he became one of the founders of the Rochester University: here his value was understood, and he was appointed chairman of a committee to report a plan of instruction, in accordance with his views on that subject. He presented an elaborate report, which has attracted much notice. It has this peculiarity, it provides for a thorough classical training as in our best collèges generally; but it likewise establishes another course of study, where modern languages and the practical sciences are substituted to some extent for the classics. The system has worked well, and has the continued approval of the Trustees and the Faculty.

Among other objects which interested him was the effort, years ago, to establish a society similar in its objects to that so well known in England as "The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge." It was about the time when the Legislature made provision for the formation of

a library in every school district of the State, and it was thought to be a point of great importance that the selection of these books should be under the control, in a great degree, of a body of intelligent men, who had no pecuniary interest in the books, and who were actuated solely by high moral motives. He never ceased to regret that a leading officer of State saw fit to give the selection of the peoples' reading into other hands, and discouraged the action of the Senate. Had our ten thousand district libraries been well selected, the effect for good on the popular mind can hardly be appreciated.

He was fond of books, and regarded his favorite authors in the light of old friends. His own library is evidence of his love of true literature. He was, too, interested in the public libraries of our city, and at the time of his death was chairman of the trustees of the New York Society Library, whose last annual report was prepared by him but a few weeks before his decease.

Like his father, he was interested in the young merchants of the city. He acted as trustee of the Clinton Hall Association, and took part in securing for the Mercantile Library Association the valuable hall in Astor Place, which they now occupy. He has, since its organization, been Vice-President of the Bank of Savings for Merchants' Clerks.

It is quite impossible to enumerate the many public offices connected with commerce, literature, and benevolence which he has filled.

Among the important enterprises with which he was identified is the Hudson River Railroad: he was instrumental in its first organization, and gave his time freely in the effort to secure the construction of this railway, so essential to the interests of New York. He gave his services gratuitously in the office of Vice-President, but resign-

ed that office, when a policy as to the route of the road was adopted which he disapproved. His disinterested services to the American Art-Union are fresh in the recollection of the citizens of New York.

Of all the executive offices which he was induced to accept, only two may be said to have had a political connection, and both of these were conferred during the last year of his life; both without the least effort or solicitation on his part. In August last, he was appointed to the office of City Chamberlain, and during the last winter was elected by the Legislature a Regent of the University of the State—a fitting acknowledgment of his eminent services in the cause of education.

For some years prior to his death, he had shown an increased interest in politics. He was attached to the Democratic party, and had acquired much influence and popularity. Retiring, as he was naturally, he could not remain in obscurity, but was literally forced into political stations of prominence.

He had the honor of being appointed one of the State Delegates to the Presidential Convention at Cincinnati; a member also of the State General Committee, and Chairman of the Democratic General Committee of the city. On two occasions only did he permit his name to be presented to the public for important offices:—once he was candidate for the State Senate; the other time for the place of State Comptroller. He gave in both instances an unwilling consent, yet felt it to be his duty to yield to the urgent solicitations of his political friends, although he knew that the division in the party forbade all hope of success.

As a presiding officer over deliberative assemblies or public meetings, he will be long remembered as being almost unequalled. Having complete command of temper, a dignified and most courteous manner, with perfect fair-

ness towards those who differed from him, and a keen sagacity and prompt decision, which enabled him to forward business and give the proceedings a practical direction, he earned a reputation in this respect second to no man in the State.

Although learned, and finding his most congenial pursuits in the study, he was perfectly free from affectation ; he seemed anxious to avoid anything like scholarly display, invariably choosing in conversation the simplest forms of expression and language.

I have spoken of him mainly in his *public* character. To those who knew him personally, it is not necessary to say that his social qualities were such as to endear him to a large circle of friends.

To one of his associates he had an attachment almost brotherly—this was Daniel Seymour, his severest rival during the whole four years of college life, his warmest friend then and ever after. Mr. S., after a short professional career, like himself, entered commercial life, but was obliged from ill health to abandon it, and seek a restoration by protracted residence on the continent of Europe. Immediately on his return home in improved health, having ample means, and leisure, and ability, his friend Kelly made an earnest effort and succeeded in enlisting him in the same good work to which his own life was devoted ; and when Seymour took, as he soon did, a *prominent* place in the Public School Society and the House of Refuge, his friend had but one wish for him, that he might be long spared to scatter blessings around him. Alas ! he was the first to be summoned away by death.

It is within the knowledge of many, that Mr. Kelly was always solicitous to interest his friends in the management of our benevolent enterprises ; he hoped thereby to benefit *them*, as he knew he should the public.

Mr. Kelly's early training was as a Presbyterian, and during the early part of his life he attended the old Wall street church. In his youth, he was brought into association with Baptists, and embraced their views on the ordinances of the Gospel. He was for more than twenty years an attendant on the preaching of his intimate friend, Rev. Wm. R. Williams, D. D. For a long period before his death, he gave evidence that he was indeed a Christian man, sensible of his disobedience to his Maker, and trusting for pardon upon the merits and atoneing sacrifice of his Redeemer. His ethics were taken from that Divine law which was his daily study.

Few men, not theologians, were more diligent Bible students: reading the New Testament in its original language, he acquired the Hebrew mainly that he might in the same manner study the Old Testament.

There were some marked peculiarities in the sickness which caused his death. The disorder appeared to be the immediate result of a severe cold which he took in crossing the East River in an open boat at nine o'clock at night from the House of Refuge, where he had attended an examination of the schools. He complained of a chill on coming out of the crowded room, but was well enough the next day to give some attention to business. The following day, Sunday, saw him twice at church; but, on returning home in the afternoon, he complained of an attack of gout in the foot. As he was subject to this, he thought lightly of it, supposing at the worst it might confine him for a week or two. He remained at home on Monday with no new symptoms; but on Tuesday morning appeared the first indication of a difficulty in the brain. On rising, he had occasion to ask for a towel, but could not recollect the name of it. During the day there were several similar instances, so that he expressed much surprise, having no idea then that the

brain was in any wise affected. On Wednesday, his organs of speech were partially paralyzed, so that he could utter none but the simplest words ; and he found himself, in his attempts to write, unable to construct a sentence grammatically, or even to spell in all cases correctly. Though he made such mistakes, yet the moment he read what he had written he detected the errors, and with a smile pointed them out to those who were around him. He would then make an attempt (never more than partially successful) to correct them. The last note he ever wrote—one which his family will ever retain, full as it is of painful interest—was to Dr. Webster, President of the Free Academy, in reply to one of the same date : it abounds in errors, but it shows the effort to correct them, by numerous erasures and interlineations.

The condition of his mind was this : he could comprehend perfectly all that was said to him, and was even interested in the conversation he overheard ; but he had not the power to give expression to his wishes or opinions further than by a simple assent or dissent. This peculiarity is, no doubt, to be explained by the fact, that the congestion was mainly confined to the base of the brain—that part from which the nerves of motion proceed, and where the *power* to exercise the brain is said to be located. Each succeeding day of his sickness, the paralysis increased, and he grew weaker until fifty-six hours before his decease, when he sunk into a sleep, which terminated in death.

Throughout his sickness, his mind was calm and tranquil ; he regarded death without alarm, and was willing to quit earth, with its hopes and cares, for that abode where no wish is ungratified.

He leaves behind him a widow and three interesting children—a daughter of thirteen, a son, bearing his own name, of seven, and one bearing the name of his surviving

brother, aged two years. He had a loving, happy home; and though so much occupied by public duties, he never failed to devote a certain portion of every day to the training of his children's minds. To them, his loss is indeed irreparable.

He was the very soul of honor; never known to make a misrepresentation, or convey intentionally a false impression. He was incapable of deceit, and he held in *abhorrence* those who were untruthful. He more than once expressed the thought: "The first thing in training a child is to implant a love of truth; anything may be done with a youth who venerates truth, *who will not lie*. Truth is the *foundation*, the *corner-stone*, of character."

He was singularly disinterested; never permitting his personal interests in the least degree to bias his public action. Though to strangers somewhat distant in manner, his friends knew him as a warm-hearted, sincere friend, always considerate of the feelings and peculiarities of others, and with a temper ever under control. He seemed incapable of uttering a sentence which could bring a blush to the cheek of modesty; and one who knew him *most intimately* throughout his life, never heard him say *one word* which, from moral or religious considerations, he could wish to recall.

Such is the history of the life of Robert Kelly. A review of the various positions he occupied at the time of his death will show us how wide a field of usefulness he occupied, and in what manner the good citizen bestowed his time and talents. He was a Regent of the University of the State of New York, a highly honorable and important office, and one

after his own heart, as it involved the care and supervision of the literature and education of the people. Prominent among the Regents of this University—long prior to Mr. Kelly's appointment—was one of our oldest and most valued associates, the Hon. Gulian C. Verplanck, whose high consideration for Mr. Kelly and appreciation of his admirable qualities for the post, no doubt had a great influence in the selection of our friend as a fellow-Regent.

He was Chamberlain (or treasurer) of the city of New York,—an office, it is true, not requiring any great financial skill, but involving great trust and confidence.

He was President of the Board of Managers of the House of Refuge, a station of great care and responsibility—extending as it did to the confinement, the maintenance, the education and reform of over five hundred ill-trained, vicious and ignorant children.

He was a Vice-President of the Merchants' Clerks' Savings Bank, a Director of the Mechanics' Bank, and a Trustee of the United States Trust Company—in which offices he displayed a prudence and an enterprise seldom united in one man, and still more seldom in a scholar.

He was (or had recently been) chairman of the New York Society Library, a Trustee of the Clinton

Hall Association, and President of the Alumni of Columbia College. All these looked to the advancement of learning and the promotion of literary intercourse.

He was a Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce. The resolutions of that body, passed on the announcement of his death, show that his valued talents had embraced the interests of commerce and trade in their extensive sphere.

He was the Chairman of the General Democratic Committee of the city of New York, a member of the General Democratic Committee of the State, and was the appointed delegate to attend the (approaching) Democratic Presidential Convention at Cincinnati.

Besides these offices, he was a member of The Column, of The Century, and of the Sketch Club, which last institution, embracing so much of worth and talent, seems to me (an occasional guest at its meetings) to be entitled to a more extended eulogy than a stranger can give.

Add to all these pursuits and occupations the attention he bestowed on his own affairs,—on his studies—on his family and his religion,—and you will have the picture of the earnest, the useful and the busy man he was.

But useful and ornamental though it was, his life was not historical. His was the glory neither of the statesman nor the soldier. His fame is not that of the author or the orator. His name will die with the generation that knew him. No grateful people will perpetuate his history or his features in "storied urn or animated bust." Why, then, you might ask, if you were strangers, do we pay this homage to his memory?—and we would answer, because he was a member of our institutions—endeared to us by an intimacy of many years, and because our feelings prompt us, in every way we can, to testify our respect to the memory of *the upright man* and *the good citizen* of the Republic.

Mr. Kelly was endowed by nature with good mental faculties, and good moral propensities. He had sedulously cultivated and improved them both. His temperament was rather phlegmatic than sanguine. His attachments were not violent, and neither suddenly formed nor capriciously abandoned. His taste was too refined to permit the close contact of the uneducated—his judgment too solid to be deeply impressed by mere brilliancy—his mind too practical to be led astray by empty, though attractive, theorists—his habits too studious for converse with mere men of the world—his thoughts too busy and multi-

form to sympathize with the vacant and unemployed; and hence his intimacies were few, though his acquaintances were many.

For these reasons, Mr. Kelly was not a popular man with the masses. Every post he won, he won by the mere force of his sterling qualities; and his advancement resulted from the influence of the discriminating few, rather than the voluntary selection of the tumultuous many. He was intended for a statesman, rather than a politician. His administrative capacity was remarkable; and if he had been called by his fellow-citizens to any important public office, it would, I am sure, have illustrated his position. As President of the Board of Education, and as the head of the House of Refuge, he exemplified this quality. While his comprehensive mind looked to the general advancement of the whole, it also embraced and supervised all the multifarious details of the parts. He was energetic, industrious and strong-willed; but his energy was systematic and continuous, rather than impulsive or violent—his industry habitual and conscientious, not extravagant nor enthusiastic—and his strong will was that of a clear-sighted, cool, and judicious mind, which, having cautiously ascertained the right, admits of no further parley or deliberation. This sometimes disturbed

the slower or less settled counsels of his associates ; but in general the correctness of his plans was sanctioned by their results. When Mr. Kelly had formed his own designs and resolved on the necessary measures—which he did with due deliberation and caution, if overborne or out-voted by his co-laborers—he was apt to withdraw his co-operation, not sullenly nor selfishly, but in the spirit of a man who from his peculiar temperament could not labor when his judgment did not approve, and which rejected alike a participation in the failure or the triumph of counsels adverse to his own.

Mr. Kelly was an influential member of every body of which he was an associate. He never took an office that he did not think he could fill, and never undertook any duties he did not think he could honorably discharge. He loved the honors of an office worthily obtained, as every generous-minded incumbent must love them ; but they never ministered merely to vanity, nor perverted his judgment. He addressed himself honestly to the fulfillment of its obligations ; and his sincerity and uprightness—his intelligence and information—his punctuality and dispatch—soon gave him an extensive influence with his companions. As a speaker, he was neither fluent nor eloquent ; but his complete mastery of his sub-

ject, and the earnestness of his manner, made him appear to be both the one and the other. His delivery was certainly impressive, and, together with the sense and wisdom of his words, made him an interesting speaker. On every occasion out of the ordinary line, he prepared himself elaborately; and whatever his subject might be, whether grave or gay, of a business character or purely literary, he generally exhausted whatever stores his library could supply or the meditations of his mind could furnish. I may be permitted to recall to the remembrance of some of you two of his discourses, one written and the other oral, delivered at the social gatherings of The Column—both of a sportive character, and yet both full of learned research and laborious illustration. I refer to his discourse on St. Patrick's Day, and that on the antiquity and dignity of the office of Chamberlain. His style in general was chaste and lucid, and just sufficiently ornate to be pleasing. Occasionally he indulged in a metaphor, which, appearing unexpectedly, became striking by its singularity and its general fitness. Thus, in his address on Seymour, speaking of the unfinished state of his projected work, he said: "Some of the most important subjects are only indicated by a few rapid suggestions, and a single word or expression which would

convey little to the reader, would, before his vision, have stood as a *finger-post, pointing the way to extended avenues of thought.*"

Again, in his speech on the opening of the new House of Refuge, on Randall's Island, there occurs this vivid figure: "How beautifully this belt of islands encompasses the city as with a *girdle of charity!* The cestus of Venus did not add more grace to the queen of beauty than does this chain of beautiful islands to our queenly city. Every new edifice erected upon them is another gem set in the zone."

Mr. Kelly has left none but occasional productions—none upon subjects of general interest. It is to be lamented that so much learning, research, taste, and judgment should die with their possessor—that he should not have embodied their results in some work of a permanent nature, and that we are not permitted to apply to him the beautiful lines of the artist-poet:

"Genius, like Egypt's monarch, timely wise,
Constructs its own memorial ere it dies,—
Leaves its best image in its works enshrined,
And makes a mausoleum of mankind."

Mr. Kelly always took a warm interest and active participation in everything that related to the cause of education. Not content with the abstruse and

more learned acquisitions of a student for himself, he desired to see the people at large fully educated, and learning led out from its deep and hidden reservoirs in the high places to irrigate the meadows and the fields of the people. His services to the cause of public education were very important. In the Board of Education, he labored sedulously in its behalf, and with enlarged views sought to extend the limits of public education and to elevate its standard. He had a large participation in the founding and ordering of the Free Academy, and gave much thought and labor to the organization of its liberal and beneficial system. In the New York University and that at Rochester, as a trustee, he brought into advantageous exercise his energy, his industry, his devotedness; and had his life been spared but a few years after his appointment as Regent of the State University, there is every reason to believe he would have signalized his co-operation in it, by its continuous improvement and widened influence. As President of the House of Refuge, he was the principal instigator and mover of an extensive reform in its management and discipline. Conservative as well as progressive in all things, he never pulled down until prepared to rebuild in a better manner—never ventured aught on hypothesis, but much on well-con-

sidered theory—never abandoned anything merely because it was old, nor adopted anything merely because it was new. Seeking improvement systematically, and from a moral conviction that it was his duty so to do, his coolness and discretion, together with his perseverance and will, so worked together, that he accomplished whatever enthusiasm and zeal could have done, and much more that they could not have effected.

Mr. Kelly was an accomplished scholar. Besides his acquaintance with English literature, he was master of the Greek, the Latin, the German, the Italian and the French languages, and had some proficiency in the Hebrew. But he only became a scholar by being a laborious student. He had not that happy faculty of acquiring a language which so greatly distinguished Seymour, whose varied knowledge, rapid analysis, retentive memory, and vivid apprehension, gave to his acquisitions the appearance of intuition; but Kelly, step by step, advanced on his path, removed all obstacles diligently, and by untiring efforts reached his aim.

Seymour's intellectual display—not only in this respect, but in others—his massive information, his classical taste, the luxuriance of his knowledge, the graces of his imagination, the ease with which he ac-

quired, and the fullness with which he dispensed his mental riches, reminded one of the lines of Milton:—

“ A fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze with bossy sculptures graven—
The roof was fretted gold.”

On the other hand, Kelly's industry, perseverance, and utilitarian views, might recall the description, from Virgil, of the founding of Carthage:—

“ Instant arduentes Tyrii: pars ducere muros,
Molirique arcem, et manibus subvolvere saxa:
Pars optare locum tecto, et concludere sulco.
Jura magistratusque legunt, sanctumq; senatum.
Hic portus, alii effodiunt: hic alta theatris
Fundamenta locant alii, immanesque columnas
Rupibus excidunt, scenis, decora alta futuris.”

The one built a temple for the gods—the other a city for the people.

Although his blood was of Irish origin, Mr. Kelly had but few of the characteristics of his race. He scarcely ever acted from mere impulse: his good deeds were the result of what I may call an ethical logic. His judgment first approved, and then the conviction of the right and of his obligation to perform it, called forth his accustomed energy and per-

severance ; and under their action he produced the results of enthusiasm, although there was no enthusiasm in himself. Neither was there any excitability in his general manner—that was dignified and reserved. With the world in general, he was considered cold and unimpressible. He was undemonstrative in his demeanor. He formed no sudden friendships, nor suddenly broke any he had formed. The road to his esteem lay through the portals of the judgment : nor were those portals carelessly opened ; but when once they were passed, his attachment was deep, sincere and abiding. If you had once won that, you were sure of a lasting friendship, and to its object he became as true as steel.

In an analysis of the qualities of Robert Kelly, it would be an injustice to him and to the subject to omit the Christian basis of his character. That gave consistency and dignity and uprightness to all he did. That pervaded all his actions. It was the foundation of his temple ; and it also shaped its graceful columns, and blossomed in its beautiful ornaments. He had investigated the subject for himself: his reason approved, and then belief ripened into faith. His religion was no holiday garb, but his daily clothing. It was not prominent by itself ; and while in intercourse with him you experienced its influence, you did not

recognize the cause. It attempered his whole life. It was an atmosphere around him. It was part of his moral sense—and with him almost part of his intellect.

With the qualities I have ascribed to Mr. Kelly, he could not have been other than what he was,—upright, just, a lover of truth and a despiser of all scoffing, profanity, and low-born jests.

When we consider the wide field of usefulness on which Mr. Kelly was about entering—with his mind matured by study, observation and experience—with habits of regularity and application, and a worthy ambition, stimulated by prospective success—we may well feel that his sudden decease was as unfortunate for his own renown as for the good of the public.

Mr. Kelly's mind was not one of that brilliant class, which, animated and illuminated by the attractive but mysterious quality called genius, bursts forth, like sudden meteors, in full blaze and intensity, on the upturned and admiring eyes of men—which seem by their native intelligence to become wise without meditation, profound without study, and learned without observation—which “reap where they have not sown, and gather where they have not strewn;” but with him the light that illumined was kindled by the hand

of industry and fed by unwearied attention and labor. But the laborer was equal to the task: his stores of fuel continually increased, until at last, had his life been spared, the spark blown into flame by his breath would have become as a beacon on a headland, flashing its light far and wide and upward, and serving as a landmark and a guide to thousands voyaging on the ocean of life. With him, a laborious spring had prepared the field for a bountiful summer, and the harvest would have followed a seed-time which had been duly improved.

Mr. Kelly was an earnest man: whatsoever his hand found to do, he did with all his might. He was a diligent and constant man: when he put his hand to the plough, he looked not back. He was a determined man, and no lion in the path could turn him aside.

Possessed of wealth, learning and position—emulous of political advancement, and endowed with talents and acquirements that might have distinguished him as a statesman—it seems strange that he was not seduced into the enjoyment of literary ease, or stimulated into literary labor, or did not plunge fiercely into politics, in hopes to “ride the whirlwind and direct the storm!” But although these things had allurements for him, the advance of the cause of educa-

tion and of benevolence were yet dearer to his heart, and in their behalf he labored quietly, zealously, industriously and unobtrusively, from the incipency of his manhood until his decease at its prime. But although his thread of life was prematurely severed, and although his name will be unknown to history, our friend has not lived in vain. The good seed he sowed is continually producing good fruit. The impulse he communicated still remains; and if, as some philosophers assert, every vibration of the air, and every displacement of matter from the day of the creation until now, exercises a continuing power, infinitesimal though it be, may we not hope that the good deeds done, and the good words spoken by our deceased companion will exercise a beneficial, albeit an unrecognized, influence henceforth on all the generations who shall occupy our multitudinous city?

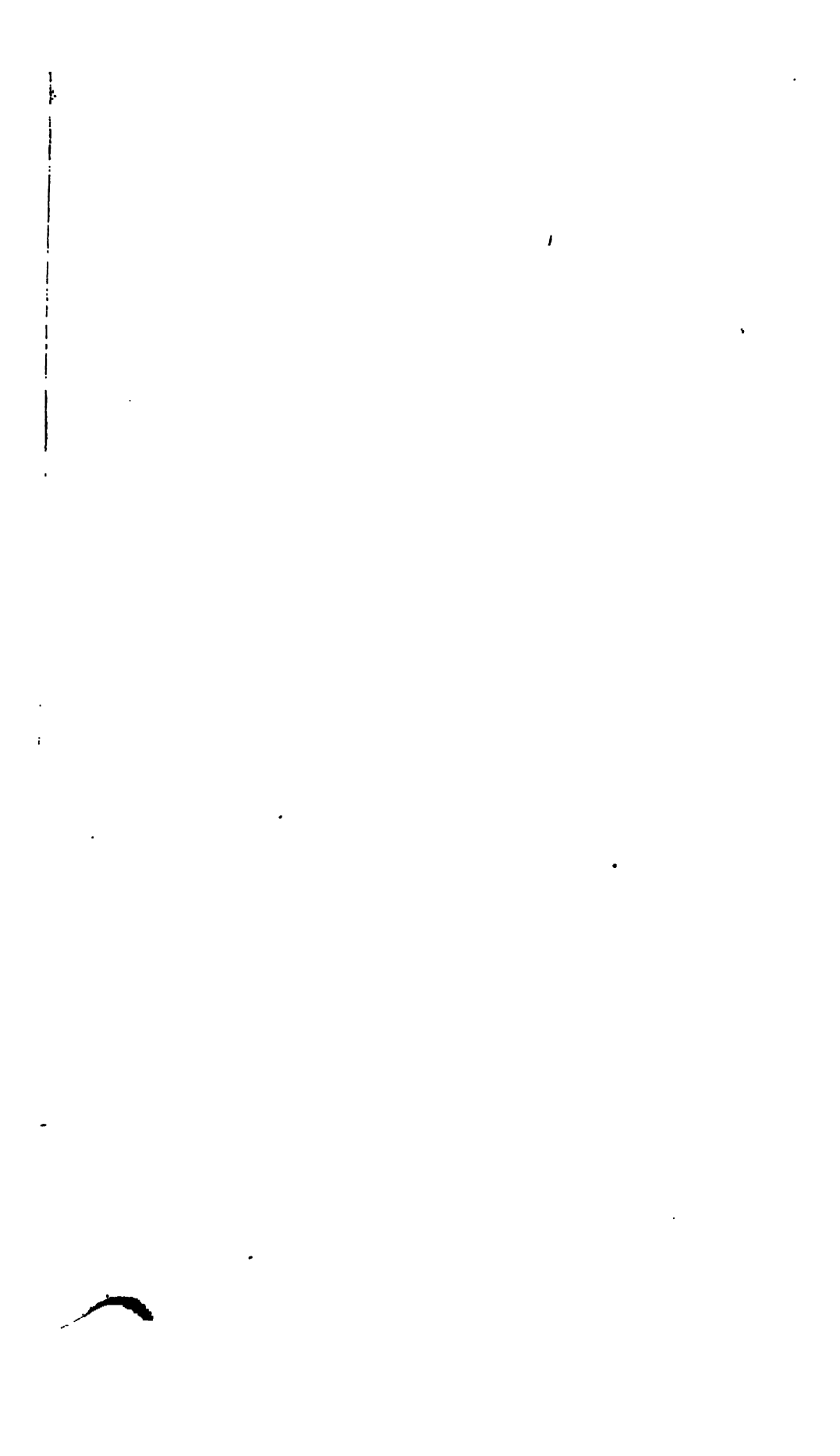
And, furthermore, to make use of his own language, "I am disposed for my part to set a high value upon the silent influence of a cultivated mind, and the effect of brilliant examples of scholarship in elevating the taste and purifying the tone of society."

And beyond this, his example was a salutary one to all good citizens of the Republic. The strength of a government of laws lies not in its distinguished

men, but in the virtue and intelligence of its citizens. The rulers may be corrupt; but if the heart of the people is sound, the dangers that threaten cannot destroy. But no public virtue can save that unhappy land where ignorance and immorality are the attributes of the mass. In a Republic, good laws, public security, elevated patriotism, spring from good morals and general education. How important, then, that the people should be trained to virtue, and imbued with information! How precious, then, becomes the life of even one man who labors with zeal and energy in the cause of education and morality!

As the strength of a commonwealth which governs not by force, not by the bayonet, but by the respect of its citizens for the law, lies only in that respect, the example of the law-honoring and law-abiding citizen, if he be a man of prominence, of influence, and of high social position, becomes of incalculable benefit.

Such a man was he, whose memory we now strive to honor, and such was the benefit of his example. May we each, according to the measure of our talents and of our means, emulate his usefulness through life, and, dying, leave behind us as unspotted a reputation, and as honored a name, as that of ROBERT KELLY!











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